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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the theoretical perspectives that supported one university instructor's rationale for teaching seminars on the Moral Classroom, examining her understanding of her experiences. The first section discusses her rationale for offering the Moral Classroom for new practitioners and experienced teachers, which stemmed from three perspectives: the teacher education literature about the moral dimensions of teaching; moral development theory (particularly as related to moral complexity); and the concept of moral imagination from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and education. The next section offers an overview of the seminars, focusing on: the curricular choices the instructor made in developing the content and activities; the students' questions that initially drew them to the seminars; what the students considered valuable aspects of the course; and descriptions of several individuals' work in the seminars. Successes in teaching these seminars included: students gained a variety of insights, learning to view themselves as moral educators rather than just classroom managers; many learned to see the role of teacher as a moral presence; and students acquired a moral language to talk about the dilemmas in teaching in their schools. An appendix presents the Moral Classroom reading assignments. (Contains 53 references.) (SM)

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Teaching about "The Moral Classroom": A Moral Lens for Reflecting on Practice

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Introduction

In my work at my university that has an explicit social mission, the moral dimensions of teaching has not been a major theme in the preparation of teachers nor the professional development of experienced educators. Although students in all of our graduate programs in education have been encouraged to consider the value-laden nature of curriculum and teaching and how to create more equitable classrooms, they have had few opportunities to engage in sustained study of the moral dimensions of their profession. I have developed seminars called "The Moral Classroom" because of my desire to create a more deliberate focus on moral education, development, and reflection.[1]

As I have been involved in the development and teaching of such a class, I have asked myself questions about the most appropriate content and experiences for students. This paper has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on those choices, the students' accomplishments, and the quandaries that to me still seem unanswerable. Now, as I consider planning this course for the next academic year, I hope to learn from ideas and experiences of other teacher educators about teaching courses such as "The Moral Classroom."

In this paper, I will present: (1) the theoretical perspectives that supported my rationale for teaching these seminars and my understanding of those experiences; (2) an overview of the seminars, including (a) the curricular choices I made in developing the content and activities, (b) the students' questions that initially drew them to the seminars, (c) what the students considered valuable aspects of the course, and (d) descriptions of several individuals' work in the seminars,[2] (3) some of the attainments- as well as dilemmas in teaching these seminars and the possibilities for including such classes as "The Moral Classroom" in teacher education.

Theoretical Perspective

My rationale for offering "The Moral Classroom" for both new practitioners and experienced teachers stems from my experiences as a teacher and teacher educator informed by my understanding of several theoretical perspectives. The first perspective emanates from the literature of teacher education about the moral dimensions of teaching. The second – drawing primarily from psychology and anthropology – focuses on moral development theory, especially emphasizing its complexity. The third depicts the concept of moral imagination from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and education.

The Moral Dimensions of Teaching

I have been aware of the moral nature of teaching from my first weeks as a history teacher in the fall of 1969. I was conscious of my own values and the various value conflicts I experienced, first, in a high school

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whose administration appeared hostile to the teaching of critical thinking – especially to engaging students in considering the social protest of the Vietnam War, and then a year later, when I encountered racist attitudes of some of my middle-school students when I taught in a predominantly White, working-class community. Only when I began a doctoral program in social studies education several years later did I acquire the language to understand the moral choices and conflicts that I faced. In my dissertation on moral philosophy and education, I was exposed to ideas about how schools are sites of value transmission and, potentially, can be moral communities.

Over the years, I have been aware of the work of educators who insist that we must pay attention to the moral lives of teachers and schools. Currently, awareness of the moral nature of teaching (Ball & Wilson, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and teachers' own sense of their work as moral in nature (Hansen, 1995; Joseph & Efron, 1993; Lyons, 1990, Simpson & Garrison, 1995) have prompted calls for making the moral dimensions of teaching a crucial component of teacher education (Beyer, 1997; Campbell, 1997).

Teacher educators face a profusion of choices when they consider the question, how shall we teach about the moral dimensions of teaching? The literature of the moral dimensions of teaching provides many paths and resources for bringing the moral into teacher education: knowledge of professional ethics (Strike, 1990; Sockett, 1990), the moral nature of schooling and teaching (Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen, 1993), the moral and spiritual potential of education (Noddings, 1992; Purpel, 1989); educators' moral commitment to democratic and equitable schools (Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990; Mosher, 1992; Mosher, Kenny & Garrod, 1994), classrooms and schools as moral communities (Starratt, 1994; Solomon, Battistich, Schaps & Delucchi 1996), specific moral education curricula (Benninga, 1991; Wynne & Ryan, 1993), strategies for integrating moral education into subject areas (Campoy, 1997; McCall, 1996) and moral development theory (Joseph, 1990; Perry, 1996; Tyree, Vance & McJunkin, 1997). There clearly is no consensus about how to teach about the moral dimensions of teaching.

By and large, the literature suggests that appreciation of the moral nature of teachers' work must be infused throughout teacher education. A synthesis of recommendations indicates that moral reflection and knowledge of moral development and education should be integrated into various courses and experiences, for example, student teacher seminars, human development and classroom management courses.

Moral Complexity

Consideration of moral development and education as complex and interrelated phenomena has been extremely influential in my work as a scholar and teacher educator. My awareness of the value conflicts that I experienced as a classroom teacher – especially my anxiety because of these conflicts – was a catalyst for my doctoral work in which I challenged the predominant cognitive model of moral development and education. Although I had an appreciation of rationality and deliberation, I also felt impelled to write about the influence of emotions and culture on people's value systems and actions. I explored moral development and education as a series of complex interactions, social-emotional needs, messages, models, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. I also came to appreciate the factors that might contribute to the making of a sociopath.

My dissertation drew from the fields of moral and educational philosophy (e.g., Baier, 1958; Dewey, 1909; Dewey & Tufts, 1932; Frankena, 1966; Hare, 1966; Peters, 1966; Stewart, 1974), anthropology (e, g. Boehm, 1977; Hall, 1973; Lorenz, 1966; Mead, 1971; Whiting & Whiting, 1975), psychology (e.g., Garbarino & Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Hoffman, 1976; Selman, 1976), and psychoanalysis (e.g., Bettleheim, 1970; Fromm, 1973; Gilligan, 1976; Piers & Singer, 1971; Redl & Wineman, 1951). I found this study invaluable after

graduate school, when I frequently taught a course on human development and individual differences in an undergraduate licensure program; I introduced various theoretical perspectives on moral development, emphasizing how culture influences the development of moral values.

The treatment of moral development and moral education in social education continued to give me great concern in the 1980s and early 1990s. I saw that the field focused on cognitive strategies or simplistic character education approaches that were arrogantly dismissive of the moral teachings of families and cultures. During that time, too, I began reading the works of Robert Coles (1986) and William Damon (1985) and had an appreciation for how these authors explained moral development and why their complex explanations should be considered by educators. I was able to pull together many of my ideas in an essay, "Charts and Layers/Heads and Hearts: Toward an Integrated Theory of Moral Education" (1990). I wrote in that essay:

> The desire to make moral education a facilely comprehensible, teachable, and measurable branch of social education thwarts social educators' interest in theory that grapples with complexities – theory that takes into account combinations of thought, feelings, and behavior. Furthermore, inadequate theory limits sophisticated comprehension, giving practitioners the illusion that simplistic strategies produce meaningful results. (p. 7)
>
> The balance between the "charts/layers" and "heads/hearts" dichotomies cannot be attained if the predilection to avoid complex explanation permeates research, theory, and practice. In order to imagine a multifarious theory that can incorporate clear visions of cognition and affect with rich intricacies of culture, human dynamics, and development, moral educators must change their intellectual bent. (p. 21)
>
> This all suggests to moral educators that the wish for sure explanation and strategies must give way to living with uncertainty. Rather than being content with what can be easily observed, tested, or measured they must probe deeply into human experience. (p. 22)

My comprehension of the complexity of the moral development and education field, my beliefs that teachers must have grounding in the theory that undergirds strategies, and my concern about educators believing in quick fixes would deeply affect my vision of a course for teachers on moral education.

Moral Imagination

The third theoretical perspective that has influenced my practice as a teacher educator is the concept of moral imagination. I have been acquainted with that term from my earlier reading in moral philosophy (Frankena, 1966) but I was most profoundly influenced by Robert Coles' (1989) book, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination.* More recently, I have read more of the works of educators and philosophers who have written about the moral imagination. These readings affirm my rationale for teaching "The Moral Classroom," but also have helped me to articulate my position about the nature of the experiences that students should have in teacher education programs.

I envision the moral imagination as a multifaceted concept with five interwoven components:

The first component of moral imagination is *perception.* Moral perception is the ability of people to become aware of others. This perception "allows us to perceive [their] needs, desires, interests, wishes, and

hopes" (Garrison, 1997, p. 66). Pamela Simpson and Jim Garrison (1995) declare that "moral perception allows [teachers] to see the unique needs, desires, and interests hidden in the words and deeds of [their] students. It also allows [them] to see not just who students are here and now, but the future of their best possibilities." (p. 252).

The second element is *emotion*. It is through our feelings that we can have sympathetic and empathic connection with and responsiveness to others. Nel Noddings and Paul Shore (1984) explain that "moral intuition construed as moral feeling is clearly very different from the intuition of moral knowledge . . . it provides the initial impulse to act in a caring fashion. A person senses the pain of others and, without deliberation, feels that 'I must do something!'" The catalyst for moral action is the capacity for feeling (p. 63).

The third element of moral imagination is *rationality*. Mark Johnson (1993) states that "our imaginative rationality is the chief means we have for dealing critically, creatively, and sensitively with the novel situations that arise for us each day." (p. 77). So, we don't just apply a moral value or rule to every circumstance, but must understand the particular issues and problems at stake. Moreover, we need knowledge of how our own behavior affects other people and insight into the real situations of others. Because of our realistic understanding of another's situation, we might also comprehend the context of the problem — for example, as David Purpel (1999) exhorts us, to acknowledge the systems that have contributed to individual misery

The fourth component is *reflection*. We continually need to examine our beliefs and actions and to consider how they affect others. So, too, do we need to investigate the origins of our values — to question if our ethics stem from thoughtfully created choices or unexamined convention (Joseph, 1990). I suggest that we think of reflection as part of a continuing cycle: perception, reflection, action, and reflection again.

I believe that the fifth component of moral imagination is *caring for self*. Jim Garrison (1997) contends that moral imagination does not imply "self-eradication." "Ethical agents," he continues, must "consider their own needs as well as those of others in the context of formulating a caring response . . . . To perceive the needs of others, we must be vulnerable enough to know that we, too, are needful" (p. 66). Caring for self goes beyond self-interest. It affirms individuals' needs for their lives to have meaning and purpose.

In its entirety, the concept of moral imagination provides an enriched way of thinking about our moral lives. Robert Coles (1989) maintains that moral imagination reveals "how complex, ironic, ambiguous, and fateful this life can be" (p. xvii). It is a touchstone for considering our humanity and ability to be humane. In the seminar, "The Moral Classroom," I believe that teacher education students should imagine the moral realm of their work as teachers, including the ambiguities in their interactions with children and adolescents, and the nature of their own uncertainties as human beings.

"The Moral Classroom" Seminars

I have been the instructor for a seminar on moral education four times in my work as a core faculty member in Graduate Programs in Education at Antioch University Seattle. Each of the seminars had a small number of graduate students who chose to take this course as an elective. During the first seminar, I became intrigued with the idea of studying the class and kept notes of discussion topics. Later, I asked the students for written permission to use their papers for research. At the beginning of the other three seminars, I asked students if they would be willing to share their work for my research. Most of the students in all the seminars have given me permission to do so. For this paper, I have also examined the four syllabi, including the goals, assignments, and readings. (See Appendix.)

Seminar I

The first seminar was not planned as a course (with a pre-developed syllabus), rather, it was one section of a democratically developed course called "Teacher as Learner." The class was required for a cohort of new teachers in the Teacher Certification Masters of Arts Program (TCMA). The students, who had just finished their teacher certification program and student teaching, met in a large group meeting. Individuals put post-it notes on the wall that revealed the questions and topics that they would like to pursue in their graduate studies. A facilitator of the meeting worked with the students to compile the various issues so that areas of mutual interest could be identified. Groups of students formed and the faculty members who would be working with these seminars gravitated toward them. Faculty chose groups based on the best fit with their academic or professional strengths. Because I usually work in the Experienced Educator Program, I had not met these students before.

I was interested in facilitating the group that chose "humane classroom discipline" as its focus. I went over to those students and learned more about their goals. As I listened to them discuss their overriding question — "how can I be a good classroom manager and still be a humane teacher?" — I mentioned to them that it sounded as if they were interested in creating "a moral classroom." That phrase seemed to resonate with the group and it became the subtitle of the course, "Teacher as Learner."

The students, ranging in age from the mid-30s to one who turned 50 during the quarter, were all making mid-career changes. During that quarter, they were working as substitute teachers, were involved in their own children's schools as volunteers, and were looking for permanent positions. They expressed their desire to have a rich intellectual experience in that seminar and made it clear that they wanted to read a great deal and looked forward to the seminar. We met eight times during the quarter. The last meeting was a presentation of the group's work to the TCMA cohort.

During the first meeting, I facilitated the students' discussion of how they wanted to shape this seminar. I helped compile a list of questions that the students wanted to answer during the course. Answering the questions that they posed (below) served as the encompassing goal for the class:

- What does moral mean?
- What's a moral classroom?
- What's a moral teacher?
- How do we become moral teachers?
- How do we meet students' needs for an adult in control/authority and still be moral role models?
- How do we teach morality?
- Whose morals should we teach?
- How can we create a moral classroom in an immoral school or society?
- How should teacher education create a moral teacher?

The students wanted to read a book by the next meeting. They chose one that was of particular interest to one of the students, *The Quality School: Managing Students without Coercion* by William Glasser. Also, they decided to head to university libraries and come back on the second meeting with a list of possible books. Although I, as a member of the seminar, could also suggest a book or two, I chose a few chapters and articles. I wanted the students to: consider a critical approach to value transmission in classrooms; think about how moral education is in the realm of the school community and not just the classroom; have at least

one example of a specific moral education curriculum; and, understand how moral educators must take into account the psychological development of children and adolescents.

In the second class, we created the syllabus. We somewhat narrowed the list to eliminate books that might be similar to each other or those that did not seem interesting to the group. Then the students discussed what would be the requirements for the seminar. They decided that they should be obligated to do careful reading of materials, participate actively in discussion, collaborate to create the final presentation to the cohort, and write a synthesis paper of their learning in the course.

I seriously took to heart the desire of the students and the nature of the course to be an equal participant (although that certainly was not a realistic description of the power relationships because at the end I had to write narrative assessments). From my perspective at the time, I felt that I had to hold back and avoid providing guidance. For example, although I was not thrilled with some of the reading choices, I kept my opinions to myself. My main "instructor" function was to provide a paper trail so that we would have a syllabus and a record of our discussions.

The students invariably came to class very well prepared to discuss readings, provide critique, and make connections to their roles as teachers. The emphasis in the early seminar meetings on classroom management strategies gave way to thinking more about classrooms and schools as moral communities. One telling remark from a student, who at the beginning seemed the most interested in reading about disciplinary techniques, was that he no longer was interested in learning how to control students. His original goals and interests now seemed very limiting to him.

Correspondingly, the students' professional work changed during the quarter; they were asked either to take long-term positions or to substitute in only one school. As they developed more long-term relationships with the children and felt more successful, their interest in control diminished. They focused less and less on their initial quest to figure out humane classroom management and discipline strategies and more on their moral presence. The students moved in their thinking of themselves as novices (and out of control) to considering themselves as moral educators. I believe that this group of students — who were parents with numerous life experiences and who felt a call to teach — would have made great strides in developing their presence as teachers. However, the students discussed — in the seminar and then in their presentation — how much they appreciated having a forum for reflecting on their practice. They began to understand possibilities for moral education that were unknown to them before the course.

One student made a particularly dramatic change in his understanding and feelings about himself as a teacher during this time. During the introductory session (when the students selected their seminar groups), Frederick came in late. In fact, he stormed into the large meeting room and spoke with the director of the program about how furious he was with Antioch for not preparing him to teach. She found out that he felt "out of control" as a substitute teacher and was looking for answers on classroom management. She suggested to him that he might want to join our small group. He came over to us and began to talk to us about how angry he felt. However, he did think that the group was pursuing a topic that made sense to him and he chose to join us. Each time the seminar met, I had a sense of Frederick's growing comfort in classrooms. Also, it seems that as he became more competent, he allowed himself again to imagine his ideal of teaching that drew him into the profession. By the end of the quarter, Frederick (a middle age White man) was offered a job in a school in which most of the students, teachers, and administrators were African American. He was hired because he was such a strong teacher and cared so much for the children.

Frederick raised several telling issues in his synthesis paper. First he described the dilemma for new teachers that the "inability to 'manage' a class that can get them fired." He then wrote that "this facilitates an

'in the trenches' mentality among educators and serves to foster a feeling of us versus them. Is it moral? Can we morally lead by example and still maintain control over a classroom?"

Moreover, Frederick deepened his view of moral education and morality. In his synthesis paper, he conveyed his understanding of the moral classroom:

> What implication does all this have for educators? Teachers need to approach morality as it pervades the classroom in a much deeper sense. It is logical to conclude that teachers should provide a safe environment, should act as a model for moral actions, and should profess equity and respect for all students. Teachers should not be in a classroom unless they truly care about the students they deal with and have a desire to make some kind of positive impact in these children's lives. But, teachers need to do more, and doing this may involve some risk, professionally and personally. Teachers need to know and understand and appreciate the tragic sense that life sometimes has. There is not always a clear-cut hero or villain. We ourselves are capable of doing evil. We must as teachers help our students to feel the brotherhood of humanity, regardless of race, religion, and gender. No one should be excluded form the world wide moral community. Teachers must know techniques to help teach about relationships: projection, omission, rhetoric, associations, role-play, and telecommunications. Education should try to demystify by increasing basic knowledge without sanitizing in a collaborative student-teacher format. Jonathan Kozol said, "If I feel nothing, I am not responsible." Above all, we must help our students to feel, to take the risk of being hurt, to share the triumph of spirit.

In their presentation to the TCMA cohort, the students discussed their questions and some of their answers that they believed they had found. They also told their colleagues that the course had been a very valuable experience. They chose to discuss what they discovered during the quarter in one list they entitled, "Assumptions about the Moral Teacher." The moral teacher, they explained:

- Has respect and empathy for all students
- Works to achieve equity for all students
- Is a moral model
- Is concerned with students' physical, psychological, and intellectual safety
- Provides appropriate instruction and assessment
- Demonstrates caring, nurturing, and trust
- Teaches moral curriculum
- Helps children become learners
- Helps students learn to be critical members of society
- Creates a democratic classroom in which students have ownership
- Is honest, open, and authentic
- Is a moral presence

Seminar II

The Teacher Certification/Master of Arts Program chose not to continue democratically developed seminars.[3] The next three seminars were elective courses that I developed and offered for new and experienced teachers. The first time that I taught this course, the sequence of our graduate programs made is possible for only the students in the Experienced Educators Program to take it. The students mainly were my own advisees

and I had a good deal of knowledge about their personal interests and professional work. They welcomed the chance to have a small seminar that would focus on their work in schools and have exposure to the fields of philosophy and psychology. Most of the students were experienced classroom teachers who had little interest in the classroom management issues that concerned the students in the first seminar.

I saw the class as a chance to for students to reflect on their own practices and school cultures, become more grounded in moral development theory, gain a sense of the scope of moral education approaches, and consider moral philosophy – especially the concept of moral imagination. I wrote these process goals in the syllabus:

- Exploring definitions of "moral"
- Examining the moral nature of teaching, classrooms, and schools
- Considering ways to engender moral thinking and feeling within education
- Considering ways to infuse moral education intro practice
- Connecting moral education theory to moral education practices
- Learning about moral education orientations in theory and practice
- Understanding various moral development theories inherent in moral education
- Analyzing and being able to critique moral education theory and practice
- Exploring literature as a springboard for moral education

The six sessions (several were half-day Saturday classes) were organized according to these themes:

I. The Moral Realm: Development Theories and Moral Education Orientations
II. Theory & Practice: Cognition & Caring
III. Theory & Practice: Control, Character, & Culture
IV. Curriculum for Social Justice & Compassion
V. The Moral Classroom and Moral Communities
VI. Teaching And The Moral Imagination

Besides preparation for discussion of the readings and class participation, the major assignment was a series of journals that were required for each class. The goals for the journals were to discuss important concepts in the readings and connections to their work as educators. The final journal assignment included students' discussion of how they would use a book of children's or adolescent literature for their own students – in conjunction with reading Coles' *The Call of Stories*. I also asked the students to continue dialogue from earlier classes. My role for most of the discussions was as a facilitator. My approach in Seminar II was to prepare a smorgasbord for the students of stimulating readings and organize the themes of the seminar.

During class conversations, several themes emerged: The first was the issue of whose values should be taught in schools. The second was criticism of simplistic approaches to moral education that they found in schools. (For example, one student was angry that his school's solution to children's problems was to make them wear uniforms; he railed against the imposed conformity.) A third theme was the sometimes immoral environment of their schools.

The students' journals focused on students' understanding of their experiences as human beings and as teachers. In addition, they students wrote about the ways they transmitted values in their classrooms.

Several of the journals dealt with how these teachers were able to rethink their understanding of children in their classrooms and have a more complex understanding of moral development, in particular, the attainment of empathy and behaviors with peers. The text that I assigned, *The Moral* Child by William Damon, provided much "food for thought." Students also commented on the value of *The Call of Stories* (Coles, 1989) and how they thought more deeply about literature as a way of connecting to their students as human beings.

For one student, Gemma, this class allowed her to an articulate personal and professional moral crisis. In one journal, Gemma (a woman in her mid-20s) contemplated her job at a Catholic elementary school:

> Teaching in a Catholic school is, for me, a daily moral dilemma. I did not choose this job because of its religious affiliation – I needed a job, period – and although I do not have many specific religious education responsibilities, the mere affiliation with Catholic assumptions and dogma makes me nervous. I was raised Catholic and this is the third Catholic school I have worked in. My distrust of the Catholic Church is intersecting with my own personal spiritual quest and my interest in moral education right now. David Purpel and Nel Noddings give voice to some of the gnawing questions in my mind and heart. Instead of feeling disengaged and embarrassed of my Catholic affiliation, lately I've been actively critiquing and question the religious environment in which I am immersed right now. I was intrigued by Noddings' revelational discussion of conflict and I have been resisting the temptation to label everything Catholic as wrong. I've been trying to "live" with my Catholic background a bit and trying to analyze the virtue and evil of my frame of reference.

Gemma then wrote about how the conflicts she faced affected her on a daily basis at her school.

> The school where I work is very small and the Catholic identity is taken very seriously. I respect my principal a great deal and see her as a very thoughtful, caring person with very high standards for her students and staff. Religion is an essential part of the curriculum to her and she insists it be taught for 45 minutes during the first period of every day. All-school prayer is said twice daily. Religious artwork is displayed throughout the building. The children go to Mass on a regular basis, and there are religious in-services for staff about six times a year. I respect my principal because I think she truly lives her faith – which I think is the point of having faith. I am realizing, however, that this faith is very obviously not being passed on to the students in any way that can be evidence bin their actions. There is a seventh-grade class that revels in its reputation as a rude, uncontrollable, mean-spirited class, and actively terrorizes students and teachers . . . . Something is very wrong with a curriculum that claims as its primary focus the teachings of Jesus and the building of a religious community, yet is turning out students with severely limited moral choice-making skills. . . .

By the end of the seminar, Gemma actively decided to pursue finding a job in public education where she believed that she might not find moral environments, but might not experience such deep personal conflict.

For the most part, I think that the students in Seminar II had idiosyncratic goals and did not achieve a common understanding as did the new teachers in Seminar I. The journals and conversations suggest that the students did gain greater understanding about specific incidents in their classrooms, especially in their work individual children. Moreover, the seminar appeared not to bring about major shifts in their practice. The

students, to a great extent, used the course to express their feelings about how it was difficult be a nurturing teacher in sometimes very uncaring systems.

Seminar III

One year after the second seminar, I again taught "The Moral Classroom" for the TCMA students, the new teachers. I knew most of the students because they were in my curriculum development class the previous quarter. Several of the students were doing their research on some aspect of moral education. Seminar III took place after these new teachers had already had a quarter of work in schools as substitutes and a few had obtained positions. I did not perceive that any of the students felt as uncertain about their teaching abilities as did the students in the first seminar. Interestingly, these students ranged in age from mid-20s to mid-30s, a considerably younger group than the new teachers in Seminar I.

The goals I wrote in the syllabus for the class put a good deal of emphasis on examining moral education as practiced in schools:

- Exploring individual interests and questions about moral education
- Examining the rationales and assumptions underpinning moral education
- Observing the moral dimensions of teaching and schooling
- Understanding how classrooms may become moral communities
- Considering curricular content as moral education
- Becoming familiar with contemporary approaches to moral education
- Analyzing moral education practices in theory and practice

Since teaching the second seminar, I was concerned that students could "meander" through the course unless I provided more structure. As well, I decided that these students, who were teaching and doing research projects, could use some pacing of the assignments. Besides the reading for each class, each session required an activity and some writing. The activities included:

- A position paper that described what students believed should be the qualities of a moral classroom and questions that students wanted to have answered during the course. [4]
- Observations of one's own practice or that of other teachers to see how educators infuse moral values into their classrooms. [5]
- Observations of classrooms, including their own, on what moral strategies are conveyed in their organization, management, and discipline.
- Finding a story that students would use in their own classrooms
- Finding an article, chapter, or published material of a moral education curriculum — in particular, a "lived" curriculum, one that they had actually observed in a classroom — and preparing an informal presentation that would be an analysis of content, assumptions of those who created the curriculum, the strategies used for teaching it, as well as critique.
- Writing a synthesis paper, including discussion of class assignments and a reflection about the learning from the entire class.

A valuable resource for the course was a video that I purchased from the Public Broadcasting Service. In "The Moral Life of Children." Robert Coles used case studies to demonstrate the numerous configurations

that support children's moral development. He also made a point to show how wealthy White families might provide a sterile environment in which children did not have a sense of their parents' moral presence whereas poor Black children, even in single-parent families, might benefit from rich moral teachings from their mothers, communities, and churches.

One of my advisees in the Experienced Educator Program, an elementary schoolteacher, was doing an independent study on moral education and assisted me with this class. Because he had worked for several years as a substitute before getting his own classroom, he felt that classroom management strategies were very important. He gave a presentation and facilitated discussion on various non-coercive approaches to discipline.

In the first class, the students compiled these questions that they wanted to explore during the class:

- Is competition always immoral? Can competition be enjoyable and moral?
- Should we teach society's values? How should we do this? Or, should we disturb the social order?
- Aren't qualities of an ethical person related to this person's upbringing?
- What can a teacher do if kids are not brought up in an ethical environment?
- What is the role of culture in influencing values? Are values culturally determined? Are values relative according to the values of a culture? Are there universal values?
- What is the difference between individuality and autonomy?
- Can we talk about children's behaviors as age-appropriate rather than immoral? Might young children just incapable of moral reasoning?
- How can we find our voices as teacher? How can a teacher be a moral presence?

On the whole, the students chose the class because they had a sense of themselves as moral educators but wanted to learn a great deal more about various strategies. Their questions also demonstrated that they had a strong interest in understanding moral development. I did not include a text on moral development in this class – trusting that the students had some exposure to moral development theories in their human development class for certification (which they did). Nevertheless, they had only a dim recollection of reading about Kohlberg and Gilligan and could not remember much of what they learned. The students had little knowledge of other developmental theories.

Therefore, I did some instruction on moral development theory and developed materials that delineated various moral development perspectives: behaviorism, social learning theory, cognitive developmental theories, social-emotional development, psychoanalytic theories, and the influence of culture. I also steered students toward articles and book chapters that would help them with their individual interests and questions.

It was my impression that discussions in Seminar III generally centered on the assigned activities, although Cole's video stimulated a great deal of conversation on the prerequisites for moral development. But, generally, the students did not use this class for deep moral reflection. For example, despite reading *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*, the stories that they brought into class focused far more on teaching particular values than on moral uncertainty and deliberation. Their papers suggest, however, that they became more critical of moral education resources.

One student, Barbara, (a women in her mid-20s) examined selections of children's literature and became quite critical of the social values routinely expressed in nursery rhymes. She discerned that the

message in *The Little Red Hen* was "if you're mean, I'll be mean, too" and that *The Ugly Duckling* seemed to say: "If you're beautiful, you will have a better life." Barbara wrote:

> I assumed since it was a nursery rhyme, it would have a good moral message, and I was wrong. I then began to think that I could use the lesson I had just learned as a lesson. It would be great to have students analyze for themselves what type of messages children are receiving from literature they read. This would, hopefully, help students realize whether messages are good or not and help them understand maybe some of their own moral values.

Certainly, her examination of nursery rhymes did help Barbara develop a more critical lens. In addition, she wrote about how the class discussion on literature helped to expand her ideas:

> There were some very interesting points brought up. First it was stated that literature can bring the heart and mind into thinking – to meaning that you don't just think about what you read but you feel it. I think that this is an important aspect when choosing to use literature in teaching morals. Second, it was discussed that literature can result in a reflective process. You can take the moral dilemmas of characters and then discuss your feelings about them. Also, stories can help you to reflect and this can lead to discussion. I thought this was a very important point, because I believe that it is through discussions that often people's feelings and thoughts develop and emerge. If I, as a teacher, can get my students to not only express their feelings, but build their feelings, and then I know I have achieved something.

In many ways, Barbara's self-evaluation and reflection was similar to several of the other students who wrote about their better understanding of themselves as moral educators and how morality is infused in all aspects of teaching. She also wrote passionately about the importance of reflection:

> I think that I have become reflective on my own thoughts and feelings toward the idea of teachers being moral agents. Through this class, I have realized that every decision I make as a teacher will have moral implications. This includes curriculum I choose, how I teach it, how I deal with discipline and classroom management, the choices I give students, and the list could go on and on.
>
> I need to continue to be reflective of my thoughts and always ask myself the questions, 'Why am I doing this?" and "What will the students get from this? I need to look at the answers to these questions through the eyes of a "moral agent." I believe that it is my responsibility to be a moral presence for the students I have. I also realize that my thoughts and feelings towards how I teach and what morals I teach will continually change. It is through my reflection that I will continue to grow.
>
> This class has also confirmed my thought that I cannot separate who I am from what I teach. At first, I wanted actual ideas and ways to teach morals. I have now come to realize that it is through myself, my decisions, and my own beliefs that I will come up with ways to teach morals. Some people might agree with my ways, and others may not. The important thing is that I am secure and positive in why

I am doing things the way I am doing. If I can justify it to myself then I will be able to justify to anyone else.

Seminar IV

The fourth seminar was a combination of new and experienced educators. The majority of the new teachers had their own classrooms, but the experienced educators who worked in public schools (one worked as a consultant and the other as in an intervention program for at-risk youth in public schools) did not have their own classrooms. The new teachers had been teaching for a quarter before they took this seminar.

The students entered the class with a multifaceted range of questions and interests. The majority of the students expressed curiosity about moral development and in their position papers asked these questions:

- How does culture influenced values?
- How do children internalize values?
- How do the home, school, and community function as moral educators?
- What is the role of empathy in moral development?
- How does the conscience develop?
- How can the teacher use the moral understanding of a child: How can she continue to learn from the child?

I taught Seminar IV six months after the third seminar and I did not make a great deal of changes in the syllabus, except to include a text on moral development, Damon's *The Moral Child*. The goals for the seminar were the same as the ones from previous one and so were the assignments that included observations, plans to teach stories, and analysis of moral education curricula. I was fortunate to have Bob Howard (University of Washington) as a guest speaker for one class and he brought in videos of successful moral education programs in schools that illustrated the development of community and democratic decision-making.

I began the course with several classes that focused primarily on moral development. In particular, I emphasized how assumptions about children's moral development influence the ways in which educators choose moral education strategies. In addition, I make clear that these assumptions often are unexamined. I also created a handout that provided a framework of moral education strategies and underlying metaphors of learners, moral education actions, and associated moral development theories. I analyzed five moral education orientations: control, character, cognition, caring, and culture.

I conceived my role in this class as a balance between instructor (in the sense of giving presentations and developing questions) and facilitator. I think that in some ways I was experimenting with my teaching so that I would could share my expertise more directly (my students usually just left blanks in their course assessments about the quality of the instructor's presentations). I also was responding to some of these teachers' quests for a panacea for what they perceived as deficiencies in children's upbringing. I became concerned that despite the course's emphasis on moral development theory, a few students were not taking a critical look at their own assumptions and practices. Thus, I did more work creating guided class activities and discussions.

For instance, to explore moral development theories and the differences between "cognition" and "caring," I asked what each of them would do if they learned that one of their fellow students (who would

soon become a teacher) plagiarized a paper that was very pertinent to learning about how to teach. As they listed their responses, I asked them to assist me in categorizing the language used in their responses. Some students clearly focused on justice issues and other emphasized caring – such as showing concern for the graduate student and also for the children that this student eventually would teach. Such activities, in contrast to the very open-ended discussions of Seminars I and II, provided me with a greater sense that the students were acquiring some understanding of moral development.

In their self-evaluations, the students wrote about how they learned that they could not use "bag of tricks" as moral educators. A physical education teacher who had enormous class loads used this class to reflect on her continued efforts to develop community in her classrooms. Another new teacher found that the class gave her a greater sense of her own moral values and how she became conscious of her moral agency. Yet, one student continued to assume that a good moral education curriculum could make up for any inadequacies in moral development. Nevertheless, he did modify his belief in character education to encompass the importance of the caring relationships between teachers and students, teachers as role models, and the messages conveyed to children by classroom management strategies.

Discussion

Students who participated in "The Moral Classroom" seminars gained a variety of insights. For the new teachers, especially those who felt the least confident about their teaching abilities, the course helped them to see themselves as moral educators rather than mere classroom managers. Many new teachers also began to see the role of the teacher as a moral presence and the moral dimensions in all their teaching and relationships with students. The experienced educators especially acquired a moral language to talk about the dilemmas in teaching in their school environments. Several of the experienced teachers became very engaged in the readings on moral philosophy and social critique; they reflected on their personal values and existential quandaries. From rereading their journals, I conclude that all of the students, even those who initially sought to change children's moral functioning by identifying a particular moral education strategy or directly teaching values, grasped a more holistic concept of moral education.

In facilitating these seminars, I have worked to provide opportunities for genuine moral inquiry to understand their personal beliefs as well as values in classrooms, schools, and society. I have tried to encourage students to cultivate and sustain a moral language for understanding themselves and their work and to generate an environment in which the students feel safe to express their beliefs. I have wanted students to consider the moral nature of their work and their own vulnerability – to have opportunities for moral reflection, not only about hypothetical situations, but also about their own ethical dilemmas. I have envisioned this class as a forum for deep understanding and reflection on the moral nature of their practice. I also have tried to mentor these students in a way that nurtures them – especially when they experience frustration stemming from conditions that confound their altruism. My overriding aim for "The Moral Classroom," was for teacher education students to experience a class in which their ideals for themselves as teachers reached beyond knowledge and competency to focus on their own humanity. Whereas for several of the students, this deep personal reflection was part of their experience, for some, the deep reflection did not occur but they expanded their ideas and began to look more critically at their approaches to moral education.

Because of the multifaceted nature of moral development and education, there continually will be questions and issues for teacher educators about how to help students understand and apply knowledge of the moral dimensions of teaching to their own work as educators. In each of the seminars, I grappled with these questions: (1) how to prevent the proliferation of simplistic notions of moral education and yet not have

the complexity of moral development theory become overwhelming to practitioners? (2) how to encourage moral language as a way of conceptualizing teaching but for this moral language to include critical reflection about values and practice? (3) how to encourage moral imagination – and at the same time be sensitive to new teachers' need for "things that work"? Moral perception, values, and actions are inherent in all of human activity and are woven into the fabric of all that teachers do. We simply cannot give teachers – nor can they teach their students – certain skills for moral functioning. We are dealing with complicated, subjective fields as well as teachers' issues stemming from their own concerns as practitioners and as humans. I think that the above questions must be understood as continuing tensions if we consciously teach about the moral dimensions of teaching.

As well, as I recount the teaching of the "The Moral Classroom" seminars, I have become aware of a fourth question or tension that I must confront when I plan for future seminars: Should the course provide a greater emphasis on open-ended inquiry and choice of readings and activities or should it be structured so that I can provide instruction in areas that I believe are valuable? I am struck by the power of the experiences in the first seminar. Perhaps whenever I have the opportunity to again teach "The Moral Classroom," I should respond more genuinely to their queries rather than fitting their questions into a prescribed set of readings and activities. (We could even buy books for the class on Internet that, in this instant world, that would arrive in a few days.) And yet, I have a hard time conceptualizing my role as just a gatherer of materials. By letting go of the curricular content, I would feel concerned that it would be "hit or miss" as to whether or not these students obtain sophisticated knowledge of moral development theories and moral education approaches, experience a rich curriculum that permits imaginative engagement with the stories of others, and learn how they themselves as teachers can bring ethical inquiry into all school subjects – science, social studies, and literature – as well as classroom management.

I am convinced that teacher education students should have a specific course on moral development that makes connections to classroom practices. How better it would be for students not only to know about cognitive development but to learn how classrooms and schools can be just communities – or, for students to study how culture influences moral development and then have opportunities to learn about how educators do culturally relevant teaching in diverse classrooms. I also wish that teacher education programs routinely could have seminars like the ones that Robert Coles has taught with graduate students. In such classes, students would read novels, short stories, and poetry that would be catalysts for them to talk about their own humanity. I also am calling for such seminars not to be about teaching but to be about life. The rich possibilities in grappling with life's experiences might have the added benefit of helping teachers to do this kind of work with their students, but more importantly, teacher education programs would be conveying this message to each student: "We care about who you are as a person. In becoming a competent teacher you do not need to shut out your emotions, your hopes, your dreams."

I really do not know how to resolve the quandary of whether to allow students to have ownership of at least part of their teacher education program as they explore the moral dimensions of teaching or to have specific courses with particular aims. I would like to take the position that students should have a variety of both experiences.

Consequently, a final question that I ponder is whether or not we can infuse the moral dimensions of teaching in teacher education? Unfortunately, the possibility of such integration seems increasingly dubious as teacher education programs are heavily influenced by state mandates that hold a narrow view of teachers' competence, that emphasize a technical, managerial conception of teaching. Such demands do not call for development of teachers' moral agency or their growth as reflective practitioners. Teaching about the moral

dimensions of teaching is particularly incompatible with the current political and educational climate with its emphasis upon excellence, standardized testing, and teaching understood as a technical rather than moral enterprise (Goodlad, 1999; Shapiro, 1998). As I write this paper, I am fearful that classes such as "The Moral Classroom" will be few and far between.

Endnotes

1. I believe that offering one course on the moral dimensions of teaching would be problematic if this class was dissonant with the ethos of an entire teacher education program.

2. All of the names of individuals mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms.

3. Of the five seminars that were formed, several groups did very little reading and some of the faculty and director of the program had serious concerns about the value of the experience.

4. The students received information about the class at the end of the previous quarter and were asked to write the position paper to bring to the first class.

5. All of the activities included taking notes for an informal presentation in class and for preparation of the synthesis paper.

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Appendix

"The Moral Classroom" Reading Assignments

Seminar I

Books:
Glasser, *The Quality School*
Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*
Goodlad, Soder, Sirotnik, *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*
Noddings, *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*
Becker, *Parents Are Teachers*
Gordon, *Teacher Effectiveness Training*

Book Chapters & Articles:
Apple & King, What Do Schools Teach?
Dewey, Moral Training Given by the School Community
Stewart, The School as a Values/Moral Agent
Fine, Facing History and Ourselves: Portrait of a Classroom
Joseph & Joseph, Teaching Children with Deficient Value Systems

Seminar II

Books:
Damon, *The Moral Child*
Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*
Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*

Book Chapters & Articles:
Chazan, The State of Moral Education Theory
Kohlberg, The Child as Moral Philosopher
Noddings, Caring
Joseph, Charts & Layers/Heads & Hearts: Toward an Integrated Theory of Moral Education
Skinner, Values
Glasser, Howe We Behave
Wynne, Character & Academics
Ballenger, Because You Like Us: The Language of control
Noddings, Educating for a Morality of Evil
Jackson, Boostrom, Hansen, Looking for the Moral
Dewey, Moral Training Given by the School Community
Powers & Higgins, The Just Community Approach
Strom, Sleeper & Johnson, Facing History & Ourselves

Seminar III

Books:
Starrat, *Building an Ethical School*
Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*

Book Chapters & Articles:
Joseph, Charts & Layers/Heads & Hearts: Toward an Integrated Theory of Moral Education
Jackson, Boostrom, Hansen, Looking for the Moral
Joseph & Efron, Moral Choices/Moral Conflicts: Teachers' Self-Perceptions
Kohl, Bribes for Behavior
Kohn, Caring Kids: The Role of Schools
Noddings, Educating for a Morality of Evil
Strom, Sleeper & Johnson, Facing History & Ourselves
Solomon, et. al., Creating a Caring Community

Seminar IV

Books:
Damon, *The Moral Child*
Starrat, *Building an Ethical School*
Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*

Book Chapters & Articles:
Ballenger, Because You Like Us: The Language of Control
Joseph, What Child Is This? Metaphors of Learners in Moral Education Curricula
Jackson, Boostrom, Hansen, Looking for the Moral
Coles, On Raising Moral Children
Purpel, Service Learning: A Critique & Affirmation
Kohn, Caring Kids: The Role of Schools
Joseph, Charts & Layers, Heads & Hearts: Toward an Integrated Theory of Moral Education
Fine, Facing History & Ourselves
Rivage-Seul, Peace Education
Solomon, et. al., Creating a Caring Community
Kohl, Bribes for Behavior
Joseph & Efron, Moral Choices/Moral Conflicts: Teachers' Self-Perceptions
Lasley, Teaching Selflessness
Noddings, Educating for a Morality of Evil
Purpel, Education in a Prophetic Voice